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General segment

Provisional summary record of the 45th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 25 July 2008, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. Park In-kook	(Republic of Korea)
later:	Mr. Hoscheit (Vice-President)	(Luxembourg)
later:	Mr. Mérorès (President)	(Haiti)

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In the absence of Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (*continued*)

Draft resolution entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (E/2008/L.28*)

1. **The President** drew attention to draft resolution E/2008/L.28*, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations", and indicated that it contained no programme budget implications.

2. **Mr. Tarragô** (Brazil), introducing draft resolution E/2008/L.28*, said that, as a result of a minor editorial change, the first section of paragraph 11 now read as follows:

> "*Takes note with interest* of the report of the Secretary-General on the use of foreign military assets in disaster relief, emphasizes the fundamentally civilian character of humanitarian assistance ...".

3. **Mr. Delacroix** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, requested a vote on the draft resolution, as orally revised.

4. **Ms. Park** Enna (Republic of Korea) said that her delegation, while regretting that the draft resolution had failed to gather a consensus, continued to support it for several reasons. First, in referring to capacity-building, preparedness, risk reduction, gender mainstreaming, the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and ending impunity for attacks on such personnel, it would promote effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. Second, it offered direction on dealing with emerging challenges such as climate change and the food crisis. Third, it sought to involve the first responders providing immediate post-disaster relief, including local Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations, and to use internationally agreed practical guidelines to strengthen the operational and legal frameworks for disaster relief. One major omission remained, however: the issue of timely and unhindered access to populations in need. Not only was access a prerequisite for effective humanitarian response, it increased accountability to the recipients of assistance.

5. **Mr. Delacroix** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union in explanation of vote before the voting, said that the European Union, whose member States were individually and collectively the world's largest contributors of humanitarian assistance, fully supported the work and role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

6. All States and other parties involved should act in accordance with international law and international humanitarian law, and the basic principles established by the General Assembly in its resolution 43/131 on humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations, by providing timely, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian personnel and their equipment to populations in distress. While respect for national sovereignty was a well-established concept, sovereignty must be exercised within the bounds of international law. Humanitarian assistance was a right for victims and a duty for the international community. Restricting or forbidding access to victims aggravated their suffering and could endanger their lives.

7. While welcoming the positive aspects of the draft resolution, including its reference to the Central Emergency Response Fund, the implications of climate change for the humanitarian situation, population displacement, sexual and gender-based violence and ending impunity for attacks on humanitarian workers, the European Union regretted the omission of a reference to access to victims, despite its efforts to accommodate its partners by successively proposing eight different forms of wording on the matter. It believed that the Council should take account of the changes in the international environment or risk diminishing the impact and credibility of its decisions. The member States of the European Union would abstain in the vote on the draft resolution.

8. **Mr. Miyamoto** (Japan) said that his delegation found it extraordinary that the Council should resort to a vote on a draft resolution on humanitarian assistance, and hoped that the experience would not recur. It intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution, which addressed in a balanced way the many aspects of humanitarian assistance, including risk reduction and the gender implications of natural disasters and the food crisis. However, as access to victims was a

prerequisite for effective humanitarian assistance, it regretted the absence of a suitable reference.

9. *Draft resolution E/2008/L.28*, as orally revised, was adopted by 38 votes to none, with 13 abstentions.*

10. **Mr. Frommelt** (Liechtenstein) said that recourse to a vote on the draft resolution had deprived the Council of the opportunity to send a strong signal regarding a common approach to humanitarian assistance. While his delegation had voted in favour, it regretted the absence of a clear reference to access to those in need and to the situation of locally recruited humanitarian workers, who were particularly vulnerable to attack. It hoped that future resolutions on the matter would be more balanced and take full account of the complexities of humanitarian assistance.

11. **Mr. McMahan** (United States of America) said that, despite the many positive elements of the draft resolution, including its emphasis on the coordinating role of the United Nations system and its references to neutrality, impartiality and independence, to preventing, investigating and prosecuting acts of sexual and gender-based violence and to ending impunity for attacks against humanitarian workers, his delegation had felt obliged to abstain in the vote. Omission of a reference to access to the needy left the draft resolution incomplete. In complex disasters, such as the recent cyclone in South-East Asia, lack of access had devastating consequences. There were precedents for consensus-based statements of the importance of access for humanitarian personnel. In the absence of robust wording in the draft resolution, the reference to unhindered access in paragraph 24 of resolution 62/94, on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations, should be recalled. The international community should send a clear message that it did not easily forget life-threatening restrictions on the ability to provide relief.

12. **Ms. Blitt** (Canada), expressing disappointment that a draft resolution traditionally adopted by consensus should have been put to a vote, said that her delegation had voted in favour after careful consideration of the issue, which was a high priority for all Member States. It welcomed the inclusion of key considerations including the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, strengthening coordination of assistance and needs-based financing. However, it shared the concern at the inability to achieve consensus on the inclusion of a reference to access to civilians in need. Such access was not an aspiration, but a fundamental principle of humanitarian action. It should not be open to interpretation. Future resolutions on the subject should not avoid the access problems which left far too many without life-saving emergency assistance.

13. **Mr. Nebenzya** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution, but remained concerned that, as the Council had never before voted on the issue in question, it was setting a dangerous precedent and reflecting a worrying tendency on the part of certain States to politicize the humanitarian activities of the Organization. Future such resolutions should be adopted by consensus.

14. **Mr. Blake** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, while his Group welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution, it regretted the manner of its adoption. The Group attached the utmost importance to humanitarian assistance and remained unopposed to any reference to safe, timely and unhindered access for the provision of such assistance, with the consent of the affected State and in compliance with General Assembly resolution 46/182 on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations. The request for a vote negated the agreement and compromise seen during the negotiations in the run-up to the draft resolution and diminished the importance of the issue.

15. Again, because of the importance it attached to such assistance, the Group regretted the repeated rejection of its proposal — based on previous successfully adopted wording — to include a reference to strengthening humanitarian assistance for civilians living under foreign occupation. In a spirit of compromise, the Group had also consented to the omission of many of its other proposals, including reference to assistance for countries affected by the global food crisis, to support from the international financial institutions and to transfers of new technology. It nevertheless welcomed the innovative references to the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, gender mainstreaming, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, capacity-building, the relationship between emergency assistance, rehabilitation and development, and the reaffirmation of the principles governing humanitarian activity.

16. **Mr. Tarragô** (Brazil) said that, while it had proved impossible to secure a consensus for the draft resolution despite many hours of negotiation, humanitarian assistance would continue to receive the Member States' support. Such assistance was a pillar of the Organization, which was expected to play a role in delivering it in an effective and neutral manner.

17. **Mr. Cancela** (Uruguay), speaking also on behalf of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay and Peru, welcomed the adoption of the resolution but regretted the Council's recourse to a vote. Unity of action was essential to provide a faster and more effective United Nations system response to humanitarian emergencies of all kinds. It was a matter of regret too that the draft made no mention of safe, timely and unhindered access for humanitarian workers, supplies and equipment. That aspect should be taken up again in 2009, as it was vital to the effectiveness of aid and was therefore of significance to the developing countries suffering successive disasters. More effort should be made to understand the role of humanitarian personnel relative to governments and victims.

18. Humanitarian assistance should be viewed comprehensively, with the Council fostering trust, focusing on operational efforts and emphasizing impartiality. Despite the complexity and sensitivity of the matter, Member States should not lose sight of the main goal of humanitarian assistance, which was to save the victims of humanitarian emergencies while protecting relief workers and operating in accordance with the humanitarian principles of General Assembly resolutions 46/182 and 58/114 and with international law, including international humanitarian law and national legislation.

19. **Ms. Halabi** (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution, as a result of the objective it expressed and the positive effect it would have for the peoples of the world who fell victim to natural disasters and complex emergencies. However, access for humanitarian personnel, a matter of singular importance, had been omitted, with consensus being impeded by the Western States' refusal to consider the matter of access to populations under foreign occupation, who depended on humanitarian assistance almost exclusively. Yet her delegation, along with the other members of the Group of 77 and China, had not been seeking the inclusion of anything over and above what the Council had stated in paragraphs 7 and 8 of its resolution 50/2004 on strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations.

20. It appeared that some Member States, without declaring their intention explicitly, and in an effort to politicize all humanitarian activity, wished to alter the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and introduce double standards. The legal progress made in the Council and other international forums regarding the illegitimacy of foreign occupation, and the responsibility for the humanitarian tragedy it brought, must be preserved.

21. **Ms. Emery** (New Zealand) said that her delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution, which contained strengthened language on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, gender and support to resident humanitarian coordinators, and new language on the Guidelines for the Domestic Facilitation and Regulation of International Disaster Relief and Initial Recovery Assistance, adopted at the thirtieth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in November 2007 and the need to better link humanitarian and climate change efforts. Her delegation looked forward to working with other delegations, including at the next session of the General Assembly, on other improvements that might be made.

22. **Ms. Nawaz** (Pakistan) welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution. The text covered many important aspects, such as capacity-building, disaster risk reduction and preparedness, the relationship between emergency assistance, rehabilitation and development, food security, climate change, and the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. Her delegation had hoped that the text would have addressed the different needs of OCHA and other relevant bodies; in that regard, it was regrettable that no reference had been made to access and other issues of concern to developing countries.

23. Assistance should be based on actual needs and delivered by impartial and neutral actors and at the request of the affected State. The civilian character of humanitarian assistance should also be fully maintained. Moreover, respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of States must remain the overarching parameter of all efforts to coordinate and provide humanitarian assistance, in line

with General Assembly resolution 46/182. It was regrettable that the draft resolution had been put to a vote; she hoped that all sides would demonstrate flexibility the following year, so that such a scenario could be avoided.

24. **Mr. Ochoa** (Observer for Mexico) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of Uruguay. It was regrettable that the draft resolution did not address the issue of safe, rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian personnel; access was a fundamental prerequisite for effective humanitarian assistance. It was also regrettable that the draft resolution had been put to a vote. It did not mean, however, that the international community could not continue to work together to ensure that the United Nations system responded more rapidly and more effectively to humanitarian emergencies.

Oral decision

25. **The President** suggested that the Council take note of the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening emergency relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, recovery and prevention in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami disaster (E/2008/80).

26. *It was so decided.*

27. **Ms. Bragg** (Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator) noted with satisfaction that there had been an alignment between Member States and humanitarian actors in defining priority humanitarian concerns. The importance of access as a fundamental operational prerequisite for humanitarian response and the safety of humanitarian personnel had been reaffirmed by most Member States during the humanitarian affairs segment. Indeed, without humanitarian access, efforts to strengthen humanitarian assistance would be in vain. Those concerns and others — including the plight of the millions of people affected by the humanitarian implications of climate change, the global food security crisis, displacement and gender mainstreaming in humanitarian assistance — were reflected in the resolution just adopted. The resolution had also acknowledged her Office's own efforts to enhance the equity, efficacy, speed, accountability and predictability of humanitarian response.

28. Noting that the work of humanitarians was becoming increasingly difficult and insecure she welcomed Member States' reassurances that the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and their timely and unimpeded access to vulnerable populations would remain a priority and paid tribute to humanitarian workers in the field.

29. It was clear from the discussions that Member States and other stakeholders acknowledged the gravity and interconnectivity of the major humanitarian challenges currently facing the world. The global food security crisis and the humanitarian implications of climate change affected everyone and required the world to act in a coordinated and concerted manner. The discussions had also demonstrated how those challenges exacerbated ongoing humanitarian crises such as poverty and internal displacement.

30. Panellists had stressed during the panel discussion on the humanitarian challenges related to global food aid, including enhancing international efforts and cooperation in this field, that every effort must be made to alleviate the suffering of those affected, and that immediate steps must be taken to address critical emergency needs while also addressing the longer term structural issues that had created the current situation. The Comprehensive Framework for Action, submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly just the previous week, promoted a new way of working together in support of national Governments to ensure greater food security around the world.

31. Turning to the humanitarian impact of climate change, she noted that during the past decade, natural hazards had affected 2.5 billion people and caused economic losses totalling $570 billion. Panellists had agreed that the poorest and most vulnerable were usually hit hardest and had identified a number of important priority actions, including the need to strengthen national capacities and streamline disaster management, climate change adaptation and the humanitarian response to natural hazards. A similar consensus had emerged at the side event organized by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), which had clearly identified the national level as the front line of defence and the area where enhanced capacities for climate risk management and adaptation were needed most.

32. While she welcomed the fact that the donor response to global consolidated humanitarian appeals had been higher in 2008 than in the two previous years — to date, $2.9 billion of the $6.5 billion requested had been received — she noted that, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners still required an additional $3.4 billion to respond to the world's most severe crises and the global food crisis. She encouraged Member States to continue their flexible and multi-year support to the United Nations and its humanitarian partners.

33. She was pleased to note that funding mechanisms such as the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) were generating much support. Achieving a more rapid, effective and needs-based humanitarian response was an ongoing process. In that regard, efforts to strengthen the resident and humanitarian coordinator system should be continued.

34. On the strengthening of gender mainstreaming in humanitarian response, she noted that the policy statement on gender equality in humanitarian action recently adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Post-War and Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (IASC) provided additional guidance on how better to mainstream gender in humanitarian assistance. Turning to the use of foreign military assets in international disaster relief, she endorsed the reaffirmation by all partners that humanitarian assistance should remain a predominantly civilian concern. The Council's discussions on the issue had noted that, in addition to the Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (Oslo Guidelines) — which remained the overarching framework — regional frameworks for the use of foreign military assets were being developed and successfully implemented. She welcomed the fact that participating organizations and actors had reiterated the need for enhanced civil-military coordination.

35. She expressed appreciation to Member States for their concrete suggestions on how to move the access issue forward, particularly within intergovernmental forums such as the Council. Improving access in concrete and practical terms remained a key priority for everyone. She sincerely hoped that, in future resolutions on humanitarian assistance, Member States would reach agreement on how to address the issue of access. In closing, she expressed her appreciation to all Member States for supporting OCHA and its efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance; she hoped that the momentum generated during the segment would be continued, so as to ensure that the fruits of their collective thinking could be put into action for the benefit of all people in need.

36. **The President** expressed his appreciation to all those who had participated in, and contributed to, the 2008 humanitarian affairs segment. The fact that everyone had deemed the principle of access to be very important was a positive step. The resolution just adopted had underscored a number of important issues. It condemned attacks against humanitarian personnel; urged Member States to prosecute acts of gender-based violence, including sexual violence in humanitarian emergencies; urged Member States to strengthen disaster preparedness; reiterated the need for national capacity-building; and acknowledged the progress made in a number of key assistance coordination processes. It was regrettable that it had not been possible to adopt the draft resolution — a forward-looking text — by consensus. Indeed, the resolution's traditional adoption by consensus was the source of its moral authority. He hoped that a constructive spirit of engagement would continue to prevail during the consideration of humanitarian affairs at the upcoming session of the General Assembly.

37. *Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (*continued*)

(b) Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 (*continued*)

Draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010"

38. **The President** invited the Council to adopt the draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010".* The draft resolution, which had been circulated in English only, contained no programme budget implications.

39. *The draft resolution was adopted.*

* Subsequently circulated as document E/2008/L.38.

40. **Mr. Delacroix** (France) said that his delegation endorsed the comments made by the representative of Benin at the morning meeting (E/2008/SR.44). It was essential for documents to be issued in all six official languages; he expressed appreciation to the Secretariat for its efforts in that regard.

41. Speaking on behalf of the European Union, he said that the European Union remained committed to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010; indeed, it had been, and continued to be, a strong supporter of the least developed countries. In that regard, he stressed the importance of each of the seven commitments of the Programme of Action.

42. The European Union welcomed the progress made in the areas of economic growth and human development, but noted with concern that extreme poverty remained high in the least developed countries and that malnutrition was on the increase, particularly among women and children. Moreover, there had been very little progress with respect to gender equality in education and none at all with respect to maternal mortality. As the draft resolution just adopted quite rightly stated, there were important linkages between development, poverty eradication and gender equality.

43. The convening of a fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries towards the end of the current decade would afford development partners an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review of the Programme of Action's implementation and decide on follow-up measures. The European Union eagerly awaited the note being prepared by the Secretary-General outlining the modalities of such a conference, including its preparatory process, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/203.

44. *Mr. Mérorès (Haiti) took the Chair.*

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*) (E/2008/L.35 and L.36)

Draft Decision entitled "Theme for the 2009 thematic discussion of the Economic and Social Council" (E/2008/L.35)

45. **The President** invited the Council to adopt draft decision E/2008/L.35 entitled "Theme for the 2009 thematic discussion of the Economic and Social Council".

46. *Draft decision E/2008/L.35 was adopted.*

Draft decision entitled "Multi-year programme of work for the 2010 and 2011 annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council" (E/2008/L.36)

47. **The President** invited the Council to adopt draft decision E/2008/L.36 entitled "Multi-year programme of work for the 2010 and 2011 annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council".

48. *Draft decision E/2008/L.36 was adopted.*

Closure of the session

49. **Mr. Sha** Zukang (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the current session was the culmination of the process of implementing the mandates granted at the 2005 World Summit. It also marked a new beginning for the Council. The first manifestation of that new beginning was the breadth and depth of engagement of all stakeholders in preparations for the session and in the session itself; that had contributed significantly to the success of the first Development Cooperation Forum, which offered an important nexus between political and normative dialogue, and technical expertise. The candid and broad-based discussions had underscored the value of an inclusive and universally recognized forum for global dialogue and policy review of international development cooperation. The nationally led preparatory meetings had been particularly effective in enabling broad interaction among stakeholders and in gauging the gaps and obstacles in international development cooperation. He encouraged Member States to consider hosting such preparatory meetings for the 2010 Forum.

50. The annual ministerial review had also opened new avenues, not only for enhancing accountability, but also for strengthening the global partnership at the heart of the United Nations development agenda. For the first time, developed countries had made national presentations and given the Council an opportunity to discuss their development cooperation policies. He had been heartened by both the candour of discussions and the determination to improve policies and achieve better results. The national voluntary presentations would generate new ways of exchanging lessons learned and scaling up best practices. In that regard, he hoped that all stakeholders would engage in dialogue

through the e-forum provided by the recently launched "Development strategies that work" website.

51. The annual ministerial review had sent an unequivocal message that every effort should be made to achieve the goal of sustainable development. The Council had also considered the most pressing contemporary issues — the global food crisis, rising oil prices, financial turmoil and climate change. The crux of the Council's message regarding those issues, was that, first, such challenges should be addressed in a comprehensive manner. Second, there were no quick fixes; there was a clear need for both short- and long-term measures, particularly in the case of the food and fuel crises. Third, collective action was central to the success of the international community's efforts to find lasting and durable solutions to those challenges. The Council could serve as an effective forum for launching such action. Its potential must be utilized fully.

52. The current session, like previous sessions, had established the Council's key role in ensuring coherence and coordination in United Nations system activities. The operational activities segment had set in motion the implementation of the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. Similarly, the coordination segment had helped bring the United Nations system together in the pursuit of a multi-dimensional approach to poverty and hunger eradication.

53. The Council had also emphasized the need for concerted, coordinated and rapid action to address the humanitarian impact of climate change and the global food security crisis, the most serious humanitarian challenges facing the world today. It had also stressed that national capacity-building for local institutions remained a priority. The humanitarian affairs segment had sent a clear message that the provision of humanitarian assistance needed to be strengthened further in order for it to become more timely, accountable, equitable and accessible.

54. In the area of peacebuilding and post-conflict development, the Council had, once again, in recognition of the role that it could play in supporting Haiti's long-term development extended the mandate of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs stood ready to continue its substantive support to the Group and to facilitate its work to the extent possible, within existing resources. He had also been encouraged by the stimulating discussion on the need to strengthen linkages between the Council and the Peacebuilding Commission; in that regard, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with the Peacebuilding Support Office, would explore ways of implementing the very useful ideas presented to the Council.

55. Lastly, it was important to build on the session's success to ensure that the Council became a thriving forum for deliberating and acting upon the most pressing development challenges. That would require not only political will, but also thorough preparations and continuous engagement. In that regard, he urged countries to plan and participate in Council-related preparatory activities, particularly those for the annual ministerial review and Development Cooperation Forum. Such year-round engagement would be key to the success of the next session.

56. **The President** said that the 2008 substantive session could be considered a truly historic session, in that it had brought the new functions of the Economic and Social Council fully into effect. With the launch of the Development Cooperation Forum, significant strides had been made in positioning the Council as the principal forum for global dialogue and policy review on the effectiveness and coherence of international development cooperation.

57. He welcomed the fact that the Council had been able to contribute to initiatives taken to achieve the goal of sustainable development by bringing various stakeholders together; addressing emerging challenges such as climate change, rising food and oil prices and loss of biodiversity; and, most importantly, adopting the Ministerial Declaration. Referring to the vital role played by the annual ministerial review, he highlighted in particular the positive and substantial exchanges of information facilitated by the national voluntary presentations. The participation by developed countries in 2008 had been especially welcome as it showed the versatility of the presentations and marked a step forward in promoting accountability in the fulfilment of international commitments in development cooperation. As for the developing countries that had made voluntary presentations, while each had shared its unique experiences, all had agreed that the eradication of poverty could only be achieved by pursuing development that was economically, socially

and ecologically sustainable. Noting that one of the lessons learned over the previous two years was the need to ensure a balance in the participation of developing and developed countries and among regions, he reiterated a call for more developed countries to volunteer to give presentations and for some of the developing countries that had already volunteered for 2009 to defer their presentations to a later year.

58. At the operational activities segment, the Council had issued a strong call for urgent implementation of the guidance given by the General Assembly in its triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities. The action-oriented and focused resolution adopted in that regard set out a management process for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 and provided guidance on the resident coordinator system and the simplification and harmonization of the United Nations development system, as well as clearly acknowledging the Council's role in exercising oversight over the work of funds and programmes in implementation of the provisions of resolution 62/208.

59. He expressed his appreciation for the strong support of Member States in addressing the humanitarian impact of current major challenges, and in particular for encouraging further strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian response. In addition, he welcomed the way in which the Council's role in peacekeeping and post-conflict development had been recognized and promoted, as demonstrated by the extension of the mandate of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti. The Council was also taking steps to strengthen its relationship with the Peacebuilding Commission; he hoped that initial informal discussions would pave the way for closer ties between the two bodies.

60. Acknowledging the vital contributions made by various stakeholders, including representatives from civil society, parliaments, local governments and the private sector, to the various round tables and panels organized, he said that the Council had demonstrated its ability and potential to bring the United Nations system together. During the session, members of the Council had stressed the need for multilateral solutions and collective action to provide a secure and prosperous future for all. With developing countries and countries with economies in transition facing a gloomy financial outlook, and progress towards internationally agreed development goals threatened, it was vital for the Council to foster consensus-building to address those challenges.

61. The conclusion of the 2008 substantive session did not signal the end of the Council's work for the year. It was important to continue to strengthen the role of the Council and, since early preparation was key to the success of the Council's work, planning for the 2009 session should begin without delay. In the autumn, the Council should also focus on responding to its mandate regarding adaptation of its working methods and on finding ways to further strengthen the Council's oversight role with regard to funds and programmes, as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 62/208.

62. **Mr. Blake** (Observer for Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, while the 2008 substantive session had certainly been successful, feelings at its close were somewhat mixed. The Council's deliberations had identified critical issues in need of urgent action and requiring additional resources from national governments and the international community, and, as well as revealing gains in some areas of economic and social development, they had also highlighted the need for improvement and the threat of progress being reversed in other areas. The Group of 77 and China had identified areas that it considered vital for development — particularly for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals — where progress was currently lacking.

63. At the current session, the Council had focused, among other areas, on the effectiveness and efficiency of the response of the United Nations development system to the development needs and priorities of developing countries, against the backdrop of a number of multidimensional challenges at the country, regional and global levels. There was a high level of agreement that global challenges such as climate change, the food crisis, the financial crisis, the energy crisis and the crisis in international policy and institutional infrastructure needed to be addressed urgently and in an integrated manner, and that a revitalized Council with its cross-cutting mandate and capacity to bring together stakeholders from all sectors and interest groups was ideally positioned to address such issues.

64. While the Ministerial Declaration and the President's official summary of the Development Cooperation Forum contained very important conclusions, the content and, more importantly, the process of negotiating those conclusions demonstrated the Council's instinct to maintain the status quo and leave critical issues to be dealt with through other mechanisms, even where those mechanisms had made little progress for many years. The Group of 77 and China urged the Council to resist that tendency to stay in the past and on the periphery.

65. During the coordination segment, the Group of 77 and China had underscored the need to ensure a strong and direct link between coordination and development effectiveness. Another important issue was that the policies of developed countries and international institutional partners, including trade and financial policies, were often inconsistent with development goals; those inconsistencies should be considered at future Council sessions so that they could be corrected. During the operational activities segment, the Group of 77 and China had sought to stress the factors that developing countries held to be critical for greater effectiveness of the United Nations development system, bearing in mind that developing countries had the most to lose if that system did not function effectively.

66. The Group of 77 and China believed that the United Nations, through the Council, had the potential to play a stronger role in advancing the development agenda and achieving all internationally agreed development goals. In that regard, the United Nations development system and all development partners needed to work for the full realization of the principle of national ownership and leadership rather than just paying lip-service to it. With regard to the coordination of humanitarian assistance activities, it was also vital for affected States, donor countries, the United Nations system and other humanitarian organizations to work together in providing assistance and development support, recognizing the primary role of the affected State and complying with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/182. Such coordination was essential given that a single natural disaster could set back development in a developing country for several decades. In conclusion, reiterating that the 2008 substantive session had demonstrated the potential of a strong Council and established the basis for exploiting its potential, he expressed the hope that future Council sessions would build on that foundation.

67. **Mr. Delacroix** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the 2008 substantive session had enabled the Council to make significant progress in developing more interactive and effective working methods. He also highlighted the quality of the discussions held, with particular reference to the Development Cooperation Forum and the Annual Ministerial Review. The European Union had sought to participate in the session constructively and in a spirit of dialogue, and although it did not always agree with other Member States, it always listened attentively and with respect. The European Union would continue to support fully the ongoing efforts required to streamline the work of the Council and strengthen its oversight role.

68. **Mr. Mero** (Observer for the United Republic of Tanzania) thanked the Council for the support it had provided to his Government in preparing the country report presented during the 2008 annual ministerial review and encouraged it to continue providing similar support to other countries. The United Republic of Tanzania would continue to work closely with the Council and support all efforts made to address economic and social issues.

69. **The President** declared closed the 2008 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.